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The HAVE/BE alternation in contemporary Faroese

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The HAVE/BE alternation in contemporary Faroese

This paper investigates the status of the alternation in Faroese between HAVE (*hava*) and BE (*vera*) as auxiliaries combining with the past participle / supine. We present the results of two online questionnaire studies and argue that the data indicate that in Faroese the HAVE/BE alternation is an alternation of perfect auxiliaries, like Danish but unlike the other Scandinavian languages, where BE can only be used to convey resultant state.

Keywords: Faroese; perfect; resultative

1. Introduction

In this paper we aim to present and discuss new data illuminating the HAVE/BE alternation in Faroese, a topic which has only been addressed very scantily to date in grammars of the language or the theoretical literature.¹

Although there are many subtleties in the cross-linguistic comparisons involving auxiliary alternations with perfects—see Larsson (2009, 2015) for extensive discussion of Scandinavian, and McFadden (2007) for a more general crosslinguistic overview—very broadly there seems to be consensus that in the modern Scandinavian

¹ We would like to thank the organisers and participants at the 2016 University of Copenhagen workshop on Perfect Auxiliaries in the Languages of Europe for their feedback and stimulating discussion, and the two anonymous referees for this article, whose comments and suggestions were very helpful in improving it. All remaining errors are our responsibility.

languages there is a two-way split in the status of the alternation between HAVE and BE with a past participle.²

In rough outline, the nature of this split is as follows. In Danish both HAVE and BE combinations are used to express the perfect, and both can have a range of meanings that include both the *perfect of result* (expressing a state holding at the reference time that is the result of the event described in the verb phrase), and the *experiential perfect* (expressing an event that occurred some time before the reference time, with no implication that its result persists). In the other Scandinavian languages, however, only HAVE + past participle expresses the perfect.³ To the extent that BE + past participle is grammatical (which varies from language to language) it only expresses a resultant state. In particular, it cannot be used to express the experiential perfect.

A number of diagnostics have been developed for the status of BE + past participle as denoting either a perfect, or only a resultant state: see in particular Section 2 of Larsson 2015. Most relevant for this paper are the following.

First: only a perfect that can have an experiential reading can occur in a sentence where there is an indication that the event is *iterated*, since this would be incompatible with the resultant state still obtaining. Thus, if in a given language BE + past participle is a resultative, in such a context only HAVE + past participle will be possible. Thus for example Jónsson (1992, 143) cites incompatibility with adverbials

² In some of the Scandinavian languages, HAVE combines with a specialized form of the past participle referred to as the *supine*. We will gloss over this in our description and use the “past participle” as a cover term.

³ From now, on, when we refer simply to ‘the perfect’, as here, we intend this to cover both the experiential and perfect of result readings.

conveying iteration (and duration) as one piece of evidence that in Icelandic BE + past participle is not a perfect:

- (1) a. *Jón er (*oft) farinn til Boston.*

John is (*often) gone to Boston

Intended: 'John has (often) gone to Boston'

- b. *Jón hefur oft farið til Boston.*

John has often gone to Boston

A similar pattern can be observed in Nýnorsk (Edit Bugge, personal communication):

- (2) a. *Jon er (*ofte) faren til Boston.*

John is (*often) gone to Boston

Intended: 'John has (often) gone to Boston'

- b. *Jon har ofte fare til Boston.*

John has often gone to Boston

Second: past perfects, but not past resultatives, can convey a *past counterfactual* reading. Building on the analysis of past morphology in conditionals set out in Iatridou (2000), McFadden & Alexiadou (2010) discuss a HAVE/BE alternation in Earlier English (Old English to Early Modern English), with reference also to what they describe as a similar pattern in both modern Norwegian and modern Icelandic. It had already been observed for Earlier English that even verbs that frequently appear with BE virtually always appear with HAVE in past counterfactual contexts. There are a number of such contexts, but McFadden & Alexiadou focus on past counterfactual conditionals. (3a,b) illustrate the type of contrast observed (pp. 396, 395):

- (3) a. *For his tyme **was** not come to dyen...*

'For his time had not come to die...'

- b. *and if they **had** come sooner, they could haue holpen them*

‘and if they had come sooner, they would have been able to help them.’

McFadden & Alexiadou (ibid.) argue that the absence of BE + past participle from past counterfactuals can be explained if it is assumed that only HAVE can instantiate a perfect in Earlier English. On the other hand, BE + past participle was only ever a stative resultative. Following Iatridou (2000), they argue essentially that in order to obtain a past counterfactual reading, it is necessary to have a past perfect: the past morphology is responsible for the counterfactual interpretation; the perfect morphosyntax yields the “pastness” (McFadden & Alexiadou, 2010, 413). Thus—given the assumption that in English BE + past participle did not contain any expression of the perfect—past counterfactuals could only be expressed by HAVE + past participle. McFadden & Alexiadou (2010) further argue that essentially the same facts, and the same explanation, hold for modern Icelandic and modern Norwegian, and Larsson has argued this with much more extensive data also from Swedish, while maintaining, on the other hand, that Danish has a true BE perfect (Larsson 2009; 2014; 2015).⁴

⁴ There is an important complication here, given the existence of **present** counterfactuals, where the antecedent may appear in the simple past. Thus for example the following, supplied by an anonymous referee (who provided the translation also), is grammatical in Icelandic:

- (i) Ef Sveinn væri farinn til Stuttgart væri ég líka farinn.

if Sveinn was.PAST.SBJ gone to Stuttgart was.PAST.SBJ I also gone.

‘If Svein had gone to Stuttgart (which he hasn’t), I would be gone too (but I am not).’

This is plausibly the reading referred to in McFadden & Alexiadou (2010) as “present counterfactual of resultative state”. See Section 3.3.2 below for some further discussion.

Given this background, the main question that this paper addresses is: what is the status of the HAVE/BE alternation in Faroese?

2. Background: Existing studies of the perfect in Faroese

The HAVE/BE alternation has not been thoroughly studied in Faroese, although there are brief discussions in a number of grammars and articles (Lockwood (1977, 133–134; Henriksen 2000, 42; Thráinsson et al. 2004, 72–73; Petersen 2013; Larsson 2014). It is clear in all discussions that HAVE (Faroese *hava*) is always used with transitives (including those where the object is a reflexive) and with many intransitive verbs; generally what is at issue is which intransitive verbs can appear with BE (Faroese *vera*), and what other factors affect the choice.

According to Lockwood (1977, 133–134), intransitive verbs of change of condition and of motion form their compound tenses with BE whenever they denote a “definitely concluded action.” There is no further definition given of a “definitely concluded action”, but contrasts illustrated include iteration (HAVE) see (4a), vs single event (BE), see (4b), and the verb appearing with or without a result state PP (BE, HAVE respectively):

- (4) a. *Hann hefur flogið tvær reisur til Onglands*
he has flown-PST-PTCP two times to England
‘He has flown to England twice.’
- b. *Fuglurin er flogin av reiðrinum*
bird-DEF is flown-PST-PTCP off nest-DEF
‘Now the bird has flown from the nest.’

Lockwood further notes that “...all these verbs use only *hava* in the formation of conditional sentences”, illustrating with the following contrast:

- (5) a. *Hann er omandottin*
 he is down-fallen-PST-PTCP
 ‘He has fallen (from the cliffs).’
- b. *Hann hevði dottið, hevði hann ekki fóttað*
 he had fallen-PST-PTCP had he not found.footing-PST-PTCP
sær aftur
 REFL again
 ‘He would have fallen if he had not recovered his foothold.’

Henriksen (2000, 42) gives examples with both HAVE and BE, and it is clear from his examples and what he says about the alternation that he takes BE to be used to denote a result or state and HAVE to denote an action or event.⁵

Thráinsson et al. (2004, 72-73) state that BE is possible with intransitive verbs of motion and change; they follow earlier descriptions in pointing out that the choice between HAVE and BE may be affected by whether or not the predication is resultative or purely eventive. In contrast to most other descriptions, however, they note that for at least some speakers BE can be chosen even when there is no resultant state (e.g. in cases of iterated action), suggesting that it may be coming to be used as a perfect auxiliary as in Danish. (6), quoted from Sandøy (1976: 157), is one of the examples they use to illustrate this—compare with the Icelandic examples in (1) above.

- (6) *Grindir eru ofta komnar inn í Hetlandi*

⁵ “Týðandi munur er á hjálpasagnorðunum ‘hava’, sum sigur frá eini hending, og ‘vera’, sum greiðir frá stöðuni, værinum”, that is: ‘There is a significant difference between the auxiliary ‘have’ that denotes an event, and ‘be’ that says something about the situation or being in a situation’.

pilot whales are frequently come-PST-PTCP in in Shetland

‘Pilot whales have frequently come to the shore in Shetland.’

Davidsen & Mikkelsen (2011, 163–164) largely follow the authors just cited in contrasting HAVE for actions and BE for resultant states.

Petersen (2013) investigates where the Faroese perfect is located on Sorace’s Auxiliary Selection Hierarchy, relying on his own judgments as a native speaker and informal consultation with other Faroese-speaking linguists. Consistently with the earlier literature, he argues that BE is used with change of location verbs like *koma* ‘to come’ and *fara* ‘to go’ and with change of state verbs like *rísa* ‘to rise’ and *rotna* ‘to rot’. Change of location verbs allow HAVE in an iterative context like *brøv hava alla tíðin komið á skrivstovuna* ‘letters have arrived all the time at the office’ (Petersen 2013, 198), and verbs that otherwise only occur with HAVE in Faroese can occur with BE if a goal is added, as in *børnini eru hoppað á seingina* ‘the children have jumped onto the bed’ (Petersen 2013, 202). Volition can also play a role: see Petersen (2013, 203) for details.

Larsson (2014) presents the results from NALS (*Nordic Atlas of Language Structure*). Although there is relatively little data from Faroese, she suggests that there is support for the claim in Thráinsson et al. (2004) that BE can be used as a perfect auxiliary in Faroese as in Danish. Additionally she shows that HAVE is attested with change of location verbs like *fara* and *koma*, even when the change of location is explicitly mentioned:

(7) a. ...so **hevði** eg ikki **farið** út um havnina

then had I not gone-PST-PTCP out from harbour-DEF-ACC

‘Then I had not gone out from the harbour.’

b. ...ið vit **høvdu** **komið** til Teilands

that we had-PAST come-PST-PTCP to Thailand

‘That we had come to Thailand.’

Thráinsson et al. (in prep.) have looked further into the claim in Thráinsson et al. (2004) that *vera* can be used as a perfect auxiliary in Faroese as it is in Danish. In a questionnaire that was completed by 317 participants from different locations in the Faroe Islands, they included 3 pairs of sentences relevant to the HAVE/BE alternation. Two pairs had the change of location verb *fara* ‘go, travel’ as the main verb,⁶ one had the change of state verb *vaksa* ‘grow.’ In each pair of sentences, one example used BE and the other HAVE. An adverb indicating either iteration or duration was included in all 6 sentences. In all three pairs the variant with BE was judged more acceptable than the variant with HAVE, lending support to the suggestion in Thráinsson et al (2004) that for at least some speakers BE + past participle in Faroese is not limited to a resultant state interpretation.

3. New evidence on the variation between HAVE and BE in Faroese

3.1 Participants and methodology

We collected grammaticality judgments from native speakers of Faroese by means of two online questionnaires, I and II. In both cases the participants were recruited

⁶ One pair with *fara* ‘go’ used it together with the preposition *við* ‘with,’ an idiomatic combination that has the interpretation ‘to treat (someone), to behave with respect (to someone)’. It is striking that even in this case, where there is no change of location/state or any other kind of telos involved, the overall preference was still for BE. The equivalent idiom in Icelandic (*fara með*) can only be conjugated with HAVE (thanks to an anonymous referee for underlining the relevance of the Faroese example and providing the comparative data from Icelandic).

through the personal contacts of Petersen; they were asked to confirm that they were 18 years of age or older, and native speakers of Faroese. We did not collect any further personal information. 51 participants completed questionnaire I; 52 completed questionnaire II. The questionnaires asked participants to judge sentences presented one at a time on a 5-point scale, from “0: completely unnatural” to “5: completely natural”. In the instructions “completely natural” was explained as “something you could say, or expect to hear from someone else”, and “completely unnatural” as “something you can’t imagine saying, or hearing from any other Faroese speaker.” They were instructed to use the intermediate points on the scale in a way that reflected how close or far the judgment on a sentence fell from the ends of the scale. Before beginning the questionnaire participants were guided through examples of how to use the scale.

3.2 *Materials*

Questionnaire I was designed to investigate the choice of auxiliary for four classes of predicates: change of location, change of state, controlled motion with a locative PP (i.e. a PP indicating where the action took place) and controlled motion with a goal PP (i.e. a PP expressing the telos). The verbs that were used as examples of these classes are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Predicates used in Questionnaire I, with their classification.

Change of location	Change of state	Controlled motion
<i>koma</i> ‘come’, <i>fara</i> ‘go, leave’, <i>lenda</i> ‘land’, <i>søkka</i> ‘sink’, <i>flyta</i> ‘move	<i>torna</i> ‘dry up’, <i>hvørva</i> ‘disappear’, <i>tiðna</i> ‘melt’, <i>síggjast</i> ‘appear’, <i>vaksa</i>	<i>jogga</i> ‘jog’, <i>rógva</i> ‘row’, <i>ganga</i> ‘walk’, <i>súkkla</i> ‘cycle’, <i>svimja</i> ‘swim’,

(house)', <i>detta</i> 'fall'	'grow', <i>blóma</i> 'bloom', <i>rotna</i> 'rot', <i>frysa</i> 'freeze'	<i>renna</i> 'run', <i>hoppa</i> 'jump', <i>sigla</i> 'sail', <i>loypa</i> 'jump'
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In addition we tested for the effect of including an adverbial expressing iteration. So for each of the four predicate types there were four conditions, as illustrated in Table 2 for *fara* 'go, leave':⁷

Table 2. Example of the four conditions in Questionnaire I (HAVE/BE x +/-iteration)

Iteration	HAVE/BE	Example
no iterative adverbial	HAVE	<i>Tey hava farið.</i> they have left
no iterative adverbial	BE	<i>Tey eru farin.</i> they are left
iterative adverbial	HAVE	<i>Tey hava farið tvær ferðir í ár.</i> they have left two times this year
iterative adverbial	BE	<i>Tey eru farin tvær ferðir í ár.</i> they are left two times this year

⁷ As an anonymous referee points out, it is possible that some participants interpreted *tvær ferðir* as 'two trips' in this case (that is, the object of a transitive use of *fara*) rather than as 'two times.' This is an unfortunate potential confound for the sets using this particular verb, but it should be noted that the transitive use, like iteration, would be expected to favour the use of HAVE.

For each predicate type we constructed 8 different sets like the one illustrated in Table 2. Each participant judged two examples of each condition, but only ever saw one example from each set (Latin Square design); this meant there were 4 different versions of the questionnaire. In addition to the 32 experimental items, each questionnaire contained 48 fillers. The experimental items and fillers in each of the four questionnaires were presented in a pseudo-randomized order.

Questionnaire II was designed to determine whether in Faroese BE + past participle could appear in a past counterfactual, as would be predicted if it were a perfect, or whether in this case BE would be replaced by HAVE, as in Earlier English, and modern Norwegian, Swedish, and Icelandic, where it is argued that BE + past participle is a resultative.⁸ We set up a 2x2 design: conditional sentences with present or past morphology on the auxiliary in the antecedent, crossed with choice of HAVE or BE as the auxiliary. In all cases the main predicate was a verb of controlled motion, appearing together with a PP expressing the telos, as set out in Table 3.⁹

Table 3. Example of the four counterfactual conditions in Questionnaire II: HAVE/BE x present/past auxiliary in antecedent

⁸ This questionnaire also included items testing the effect of including a past adverbial in non-conditional, root clauses. As this does not bear so directly on the main question addressed in this paper, we do not present the results of this part of the questionnaire here.

⁹ When verbs like *noyðast* ‘need’ appear in the supine themselves, they are frequently followed by other supines, rather than infinitives, as in the consequent in the last two examples in the table. It is possible that this use varies dialectally (Henriksen 1991); even if this is so however it would affect conditions with HAVE in the antecedent and those with BE equally.

Tense	HAVE/BE	Example
present	HAVE	<p><i>Um hann hevur svomið til oynna í dag,</i></p> <p>if he has swum to island today</p> <p><i>so noyðist hann at fáa ein bát at sigla seg heim aftur.</i></p> <p>so needs he to get a boat to sail SELF home again</p> <p>‘If he has swum to the island today, he will need to get a boat to get back home.’</p>
present	BE	<p><i>Um hann er svomin til oynna í dag,</i></p> <p>if he is swum to island today</p> <p><i>so noyðist hann at fáa ein bát at sigla seg heim aftur.</i></p> <p>so needs he to get a boat to sail SELF home again</p>
past	HAVE	<p><i>Um hann hevði svomið til oynna í gjár, so hevði hann</i></p> <p>if he had swum to island yesterday so had he</p> <p><i>noyðst at fingið ein bát at siglt seg heim aftur.</i></p> <p>needed to got a boat to sailed SELF home again</p> <p>‘If he had swum to the island yesterday, he would have needed to get a boat to get back home.’</p>
past	BE	<p><i>Um hann var svomin til oynna í gjár, so hevði hann</i></p> <p>If he was swum to island yesterday so had he</p> <p><i>noyðst at fingið ein bát at siglt seg heim aftur.</i></p> <p>needed to got a boat to sailed SELF home again</p>

Each participant saw two examples of each condition, and only ever one example from each set.

The prediction is that if BE + past participle in Faroese is a stative resultative, then when the morphology in the antecedent and consequent is past, only HAVE should be possible as the auxiliary in the antecedent. There should be no such effect when the tense morphology is present rather than past; in these cases we should just see the “baseline” preferences for HAVE/BE.

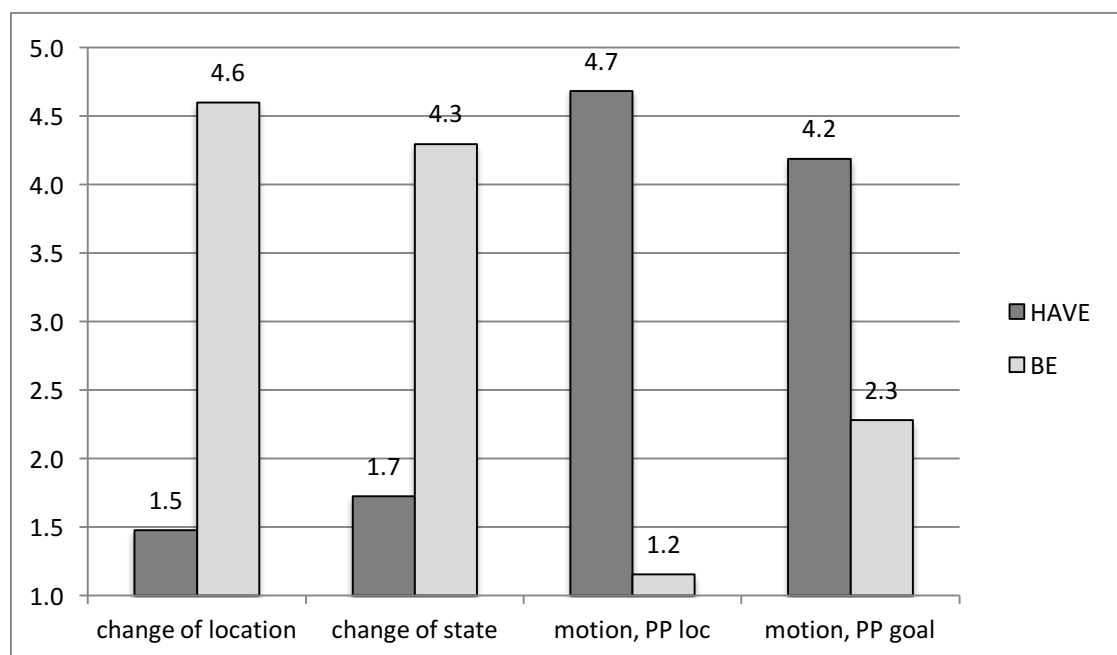
In addition to the test items there were 32 fillers.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Effect of predicate type, and iteration, on choice of auxiliary.

The means for the judgments on the four different predicate types when there was no indicator of iteration are shown in Figure 1. See Table 1 above for examples of the different predicate types. (7) gives four sample sentences for the contrast between verbs of motion with a PP expressing location and with a PP expressing goal (these correspond to the third and fourth pair of columns in the graph in Figure 1).

Figure 1. Mean judgments for 4 different predicate types, non-iterative context

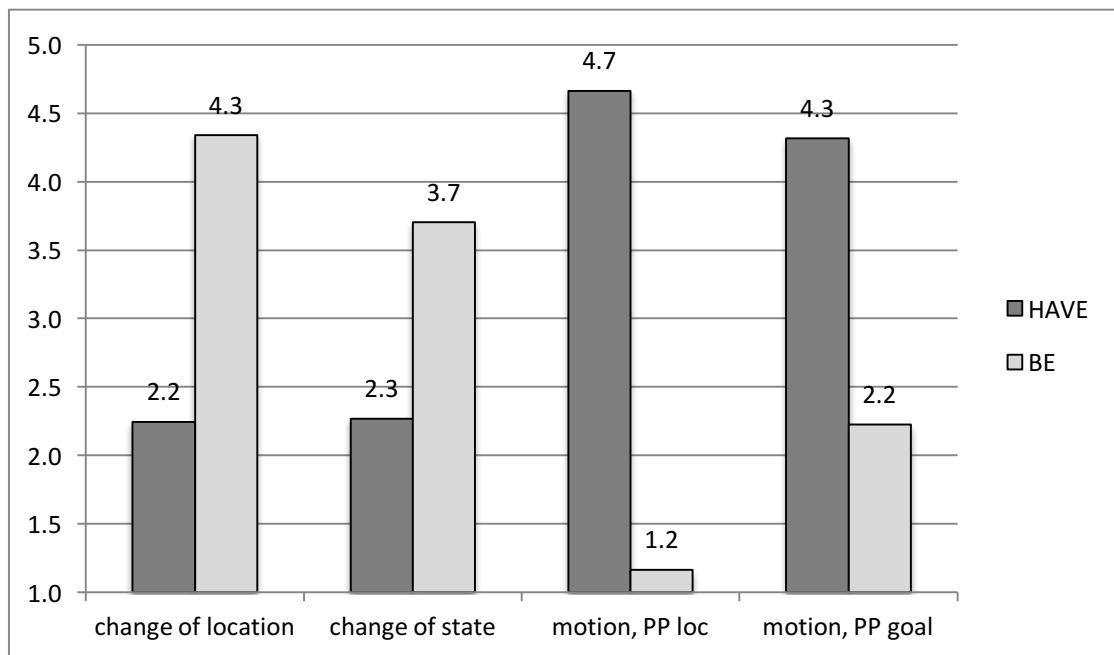


- (8) a. *Hon hevur joggað í Havnini.* change of location + PP loc, HAVE
 she has jogged in Tórshavn
 ‘She has jogged in Tórshavn.’
- b. *Hon er joggað í Havnini.* change of location + PP loc, BE
 she is jogged in Tórshavn
 Lit: ‘She is jogged in Tórshavn.’
- c. *Hon hevur joggað til Kalbaks.* change of location +PP goal, HAVE
 she has jogged to Kalbak.
 ‘She has jogged to Kalbak.’
- d. *Hon er joggað til Kalbaks.* change of location +PP goal, BE
 she is jogged to Kalbak
 Lit: ‘She is jogged to Kalbak.’

As is evident from the graph, there is a strong preference for verbs of change of location and change of state to appear with BE; conversely verbs of controlled motion without an explicit telos (that is, those with a PP expressing location, rather than goal) preferentially appear with HAVE. HAVE is also preferred with these verbs even when a telos is expressed explicitly; in this case the acceptability of BE increases, but it is still the less preferred option.

Figure 2 shows the means for the judgments on the same four predicate classes, but in this case where the sentence includes an expression of iteration, as illustrated in (9).

Figure 2 Mean judgments for 4 different predicate types, iterative context



- (9) a. *Hon hevur joggað nakrar ferðir í Havnini.*
 she has jogged some times in Tórshavn
 ‘She has occasionally jogged in Tórshavn.’
- b. *Hon er joggað nakrar ferðir í Havnini.*
 she is jogged some times in Tórshavn
 Lit: ‘She is occasionally jogged in Tórshavn.’
- c. *Hon hevur joggað til Kalbaks tvær ferðir í dag.*
 she has jogged to Kalbak two times today.
 ‘She has jogged to Kalbak twice today.’
- d. *Hon er joggað til Kalbaks tvær ferðir í dag.*
 she is jogged to Kalbak two times today
 Lit: ‘She is jogged to Kalbak twice today.’

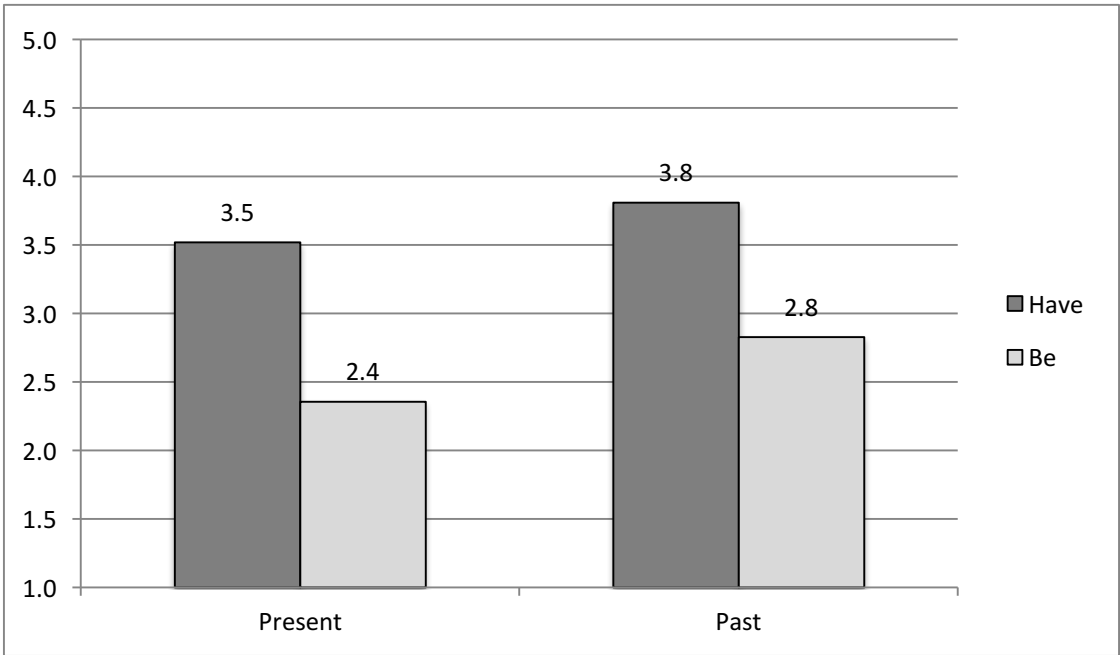
As Figure 2 shows, even when an expression of iteration is included, BE is still the preferred auxiliary for verbs of location and change of state, even though—as can be seen by comparing with the previous graph—the acceptability of HAVE increases to

some extent. For the other two classes of verbs, the acceptability of HAVE was virtually at ceiling in any case, but it should be observed that the intermediate acceptability of BE with verbs of controlled motion + telos/goal is unaffected (in particular, it does not decline).

3.3.2 Counterfactuals.

Figure 3 shows the means for the judgments on the counterfactual conditional sentences with present and past morphology on the auxiliary accompanying the verb of motion in the antecedent. An example of one set illustrating these four conditions is given in (10)

Figure 3. Mean judgments on counterfactuals with present or past auxiliaries in the antecedent



- (10) a. *Um flogskiparin **hefur** flogið til Bergen í dag, so verður hann*
 if captain.DEF **has** flown to Bergen today so becomes he
veðurfastur har í fleiri dagar.
 stormbound there for several days

‘If the captain has flown to Bergen today he will be stormbound there for several days.’ Present HAVE in antecedent

- b. *Um flogskiparin **er** flogin til Bergen í dag, so verður hann*
 if captain.DEF **is** flown to Bergen today so becomes he
veðurfastur har í fleiri dagar.
 stormbound there for several days

‘If the captain has flown to Bergen today he will be stormbound there for several days.’ Present BE in antecedent

- c. *Um flogskiparin **hevði** flogið til Bergen síðstu viku, so hevði hann verið*
 if captain.DEF **had** flown to Bergen last week so had he been
veðurfastur har í fleiri dagar.
 stormbound there for several days

‘If the captain had flown to Bergen last week he would have been stormbound there for several days.’ Past HAVE in antecedent

- d. *Um flogskiparin **var** flogin til Bergen síðstu viku, so hevði hann verið*
 if captain.DEF **was** flown to Bergen last week so had he been
veðurfastur har í fleiri dagar.
 stormbound there for several days

‘If the captain has flown to Bergen today he will be stormbound there for several days.’ Past BE in antecedent

Recall that the prediction is that if BE + past participle could only express a resultant state, it could not be used in the past tense to form the antecedent in a past conditional (as in (10d) above), as that requires the past of a perfect, as argued in McFadden and Alexiadou (2010), summarized above in Section 1. Instead we would

expect the antecedent of a past conditional to require the use of HAVE, as in (10c). As noted earlier, however, there is the complication that, even in languages that do not form the perfect with BE, there may be an alternative interpretation of examples with the past tense of BE + past participle as a present counterfactual of a result state, although McFadden and Alexiadou argue that this reading is “highly marked” and infrequent in Earlier English and modern German, the languages they discuss in most detail (p. 404). We have attempted to reduce the possibility of this reading by including past-oriented adverbials such as *síðstu viku* ‘last week’ in the PAST conditions versus present-oriented adverbials like *i dag* in the PRESENT conditions, but more work needs to be done to determine whether the use of a past-oriented adverbial in this way completely excludes the present counterfactual interpretation.¹⁰

As we already saw, verbs of controlled motion in Faroese combine preferentially with HAVE even when there is an overt telos (expressed as a goal PP), as

¹⁰ Encouragingly, it appears that adding past adverbials to the Icelandic examples mentioned earlier results in unacceptability (Höskuldur Thráinsson, Thórhallur Eythórsson, personal communication):

- (i) Ef Sveinn væri farinn til Stuttgart (*í síðustu viku)

if Sveinn was.PAST.SBJ gone to Stuttgart (*last week)

væri ég líka farinn.

was.PAST.SBJ I also gone.

Intended: ‘If Svein had gone to Stuttgart (which he hasn’t) (*last week), I would be gone too (but I am not).

This is consistent with the view that Icelandic differs from Faroese in only allowing a “resultant state” interpretation for BE + past participle, and with the hypothesis that the inclusion of a past adverbial may exclude that reading.

in these examples (see also Figure 1). However, as we see here in the present counterfactuals, and already saw in Figure 1, BE is not judged to be completely ungrammatical. The most important point to note here, however, is that past counterfactuals are no less compatible with BE than present counterfactuals. That is to say, these results do not pattern together with those reported in McFadden & Alexiadou for Earlier English, Norwegian, and Icelandic. Although there are considerable complications here given the different possible interpretations of conditionals that remain to be fully explored, at least as a preliminary result this again appears to be most compatible with the hypothesis that BE + past participle can express the perfect in Faroese.

3.4 Discussion

Taken together, our results strongly suggest that Faroese has a HAVE/BE alternation in the perfect, rather than a combination of a perfect with HAVE and a stative resultative with BE. Predicates that appear preferentially with BE do so even when iteration is explicitly invoked in the clause (Figure 2), in clear contrast to what has been reported for Icelandic (Jonsson 1992, 143). This demonstrates that BE + past participle does not necessarily convey that a resultant state holds; rather, it seems that BE + past participle can express an experiential perfect. This result is strengthened further by the results of the subexperiment on counterfactuals reported in Figure 3. As discussed above, in Earlier English, where there is evidence that BE + past participle could only denote a resultant state, WAS/WERE + past participle appeared not to be able to express a past counterfactual; instead, even verbs that frequently occurred as past participles with BE instead occur almost exclusively with HAD in this context. But we found no evidence of such a tendency in Faroese: for the type of predicate that we tested (verb of controlled motion + PP expressing telos/goal) there was no decrease in the relative

acceptability of BE, or increase in the acceptability of HAVE, in past counterfactual antecedents. This contrasts with the description of BE stative resultatives in Earlier English, Norwegian, and Icelandic set out in McFadden & Alexiadou 2010. So again here our evidence supports the hypothesis that in Faroese BE + past participle can express the perfect, just as HAVE + past participle does for other classes of verbs.

It is striking that in Lockwood's 1977 grammar (first published more than two decades earlier, in 1955), it is specifically reported that in conditionals only HAVE appears (see example (5) above). Lockwood does not single out past counterfactual conditionals, but in fact both the examples that he cites are of this type. Yet we did not find evidence for this claim in our data. One possibility that suggests itself, then, is that there may have been a change taking place in the language.

As is well-known, Faroese is in quite close contact with Danish (see Petersen 2010), the one Scandinavian language that has been argued to have a true HAVE/BE alternation in the perfect. It is therefore tempting to conclude that the use of BE + past participle as a perfect, rather than just a stative resultative, is a relatively recent development (hence the difference between our findings and the description in Lockwood 1955/1977), and that this is due to influence from Danish.

We plan further research in order to test this hypothesis more thoroughly. First, as we need more information about earlier stages of the language, we plan to carry out corpus work on texts from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Second, we plan to replicate the relevant parts of our questionnaires with Danish materials and Danish participants in order to be able to make the most direct comparison between the two languages. This is particularly important as it seems that, as well as the similarities suggested by our data, there may also be differences.

As evident in all the data we have presented above, the combination of a verb of controlled motion with a PP expressing the telos/goal always favoured HAVE over BE in our data, even if the degree of preference was less than when the PP expressed location. This is somewhat surprising given the descriptions of Faroese in e.g. Lockwood 1977, Henriksen 2000, Thráinsson et al 2004. But it also appears to differ from Danish, where adding a PP expressing a telos/goal results in a higher frequency of BE over HAVE (see for example the discussion in Hansen & Heltoft 2011, 194f). Here, comparable judgment data from Danish would help to clarify whether there really is a difference between the two languages in this respect. Further, we have not been able to find any detailed description of past counterfactuals in Danish. Given the claim that in Danish BE + past participle expresses a perfect, it is expected that WAS + past participle should be able to express a past counterfactual reading, and indeed this seems to be the case. Nevertheless, there is also some evidence that, even in Danish, past counterfactual contexts increase the acceptability/probability of HAVE (Mikkelsen 1911, 425). This also requires further investigation.

4. Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to begin to fill in the lack of information concerning the HAVE/BE alternation in Faroese. Judgment data from two online questionnaires, each completed by around 50 native speakers of Faroese, suggest strongly that—like Danish but unlike the other Scandinavian languages, including Icelandic—Faroese BE + past participle expresses the perfect, rather than being a stative resultative. There is some evidence that this may be a relatively recent development, possibly under the influence of Danish; we have given some indications as to what further work remains to be done to test this hypothesis further.

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